

6/14/68

Witness Places a Woman With Sirhan

Continued From Page 1, Col. 3

partment had organized a special 22-man force to pursue leads in the case, in collaboration with the Federal Bureau of Investigation and the District Attorney's office.

The grand jury transcript also contained testimony that made the following points:

¶Sirhan, at a suburban rifle range only 12 hours before the attack on Senator Kennedy, shot upwards of 300 "mini-magnum" disintegrating bullets of special destructive power in a session of rapid-firing practice.

¶Senator Kennedy was hit by three bullets rather than two, as previously reported—the fatal one fired perhaps only inches from his head.

¶Mrs. Kennedy was shielded, as the shots were fired "like firecrackers," by Roosevelt Grier, star of the Los Angeles Rams football team.

¶Mrs. Kennedy became momentarily confused after the shooting and slapped another victim, Ira Goldstein, a newsman, who had asked about her husband — then quickly apologized and kissed Mr. Goldstein.

¶Arthur Placencia and Travis White, the two police officers who rushed the defendant out of the hotel, felt they had narrowly averted lethal attacks on him by groups of outraged bystanders both in the pantry and at the hotel entrance.

¶Neither of the arresting officers knew that Senator Kennedy had been the target of the attack until informed by the State Assembly Speaker, Jesse M. Unruh, Mr. Kennedy's California campaign chairman, as they were driving the prisoner to a police station.

¶On the way, one of the officers pulled out his field manual and twice read to the prisoner his constitutional rights.

The 23-member grand jury heard testimony from 23 witnesses in the all-day session before voting the murder indictment, which carries a possible death penalty. The jury also voted indictments on five counts of assault with intent to murder, relating to five indi-

dental victims of the Kennedy attack.

The testimony about "the girl in the polka-dot dress" came from Vincent T. Di Pierro, a 19-year-old Santa Monica City College freshman, son of Angelo Di Pierro, the Ambassador banquet manager. The youth was working as a waiter that night.

As Senator Kennedy strode into the pantry, after his claiming victory in California's Presidential primary, "I walked with him up to the ice machine," Mr. Di Pierro testified. "And it was there that I noticed there was a girl and the accused person standing on what we call a tray stacker. . . a very good-looking girl next to him.

"I would never forget what she looked like because she had a very good-looking figure — and the dress was kind of lousy. It looked as though it was a white dress and it had either black or dark purple polka-dots on it. It kind of had . . . like a bib in the front. She had dark hair that was cut, I would say, just above the shoulders. She had what looked like a short nose. She wasn't too pretty. She had a very good figure."

"They were both standing together," he said. "He looked as though he either talked to her or flirted with her, because she smiled. Together, they were both smiling, as he got down, he was smiling."

"In fact, the minute the first two shots were fired, he still had a very sick-looking smile on his face. That's one thing — I can never forget that."

Mr. Di Pierro said he had not seen the woman after the shooting.

Three women voluntarily went to the police last week, each disclaiming any connection with the crime but suggesting that she might have been the "polka-dot" woman. The police dismissed them as publicity seekers or otherwise irrelevant to the case.

Another hotel employe, Jesus Perez, a kitchen helper, identified photographs of the defendant and told the grand jury that "he was talking to me about

half an hour before the shooting" in the pantry.

"He asked me about three or four times if Mr. Kennedy coming that way, coming through that way. And I answer I don't know."

The testimony of several hotel employes indicated that Senator Kennedy's entry into the pantry-corridor after his speech had been, as far as they knew, a last-minute move.

The gist of the testimony was that it was the merest fluke that had taken the Senator into a confrontation with his assassin.

The 273-page grand jury transcript was released by the Superior Court as soon as a copy had been made available to Sirhan's counsel, Deputy Public Defender Wilbur Littlefield. Sirhan, confined under heavy guard in the county jail, has indicated he would like private counsel, but no arrangements have yet been completed.

Police chief Houghton said that the special unit handling the investigation would be headed by Capt. Hugh Brown, head of the homicide division.

District Attorney Evelle Younger announced that the prosecuting staff on the case would consist of Lynn D. Compton, his chief deputy; John E. Howard, chief of his special investigations divisions, who presented the case to the grand jury, and Deputy District Attorney David N. Fitts.